SYNOPSIS OF THE INTRODUCTION OF

DR. PAUL S. TAYLOR

TO THE COMMONWEALTH CLUB

by Will J. French, Luncheon Chairman.

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Paul S. Taylor graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1917. He served with the Second Division, A.E.F., 1917-1919, advancing to the rank of Captain of Marines.

At the end of his military service, he resumed his studies at the University of California in Berkeley, where he received a M.A. degree in 1920 and a Ph.D. in 1922. Since 1928 he has been an associate professor of Economics at the University of California. Because of special researches and resulting knowledge of the problems of agricultural labor, Dr. Taylor was invited to join the staff of the United States Resettlement Administration as Regional Labor Relations Adviser. He obtained leave from the University to accept the position, and his talk on "The Migrants and California's Future" is the result of months of careful study of this particular phase of the agricultural labor problem.

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RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
509 AMERICAN TRUST BUILDING
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

RELEASE FOR AFTERNOON PAPERS FRIDAY, SEPT. 13, 12:15 P.M.

THE MIGRANTS AND CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

The trek to California, and the trek in California.

By Dr. Paul S. Taylor, Regional Labor Adviser, Resettlement Administration

Delivered before the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco
Sept. 13, 1935

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A new common refrain has appeared in the headlines of our newspapers. We are told that California is menaced by an "influx of indigents", of "paupers", of "jobless". A Los Angeles 'columnist' cries in alarm: "That 5000 indigents are coming into southern California" ... leaves one appalled. This is the gravest problem before the United States ... these tattered migrations". Lamenting our good roads he adds: "The Chinese, wiser than we, have delayed building a great system of highways for that very reason - to head off these dangerous migrations - indigent people stampeding from the farms into cities to live on charity". In June an aroused state assembly passed a bill to debar from California "indigents and persons likely to become public charges", but cooler counsel prevailed in the Senate and the bill failed to become law.

Interested, but more aloof, the national magazines have taken up the story under the titles "California, here we come", and "Again the covered wagon". And they even ridicule us Californians, as does Walter Davenport in Collier's, that "All this migration of the unemployed" is "a part of (our) reward for all the milk-and-honey ballyhoo (we) had been broadcasting for years. Come live in Southern California for the good of your soul, (we) used to sign ... In California, (we) once told them you live life; elsewhere you merely spend it ... 'Even the tears one sheds in California are tears of gladness.!" So effectively have we "sold" our state that out of every five native white Americans now in California, three are literally "immigrants" to this State. Perhaps we Californians, native and "immigrant", can't complain too much that we are the Mecca of the nation, and that even the distressed have heard our praises and our appeals.

Stand today at the highway portals of California, particularly at the southeastern border. See the shiny cars of tourists, the huge trucks of commerce, the equipment of campers, as they roll by. And at intervals the slow-moving and conspicuous cars loaded with the refugees from drought and depression in other states. They travel in old automobiles and light trucks, some of them home-made, and frequently with trailers behind. All their worldly possessions are piled on the car and covered with old canvas or ragged bedding, with perhaps bedsprings atop, a small iron cook-stove on the running board, a battered trunk, lantern, and galvanized iron washtub tied on behind. Children, aunts, grandmothers and a dog are jammed into the car, stretching its capacity incredibly. A neighbor boy sprawls on top of the loaded trailer.

Most of the refugees are in obvious distress. Clothing is sometimes neat and in good condition, particularly if the emigrants left last fall, came via Arizona, and made a little money in the cotton harvest there. But sometimes it is literally in tatters. At worst, these people lack money even for a California auto license. Asked for the $3 fee, a mother with six children and only $3.40 replied, "That's food for my babies!" She was allowed to proceed without a license.

Are these people riff-raff? Are they the almost unmitigated "moochers" that some declare? Are they an "invading horde of idle", as the newspapers call them? After having seen hundreds of them all they way from Yuma to Marysville, I cannot subscribe to this view. These people are victims of dust storms, of drought which preceded the dust, of protracted depression which preceded the drought. "It seems like God has forsaken us back there in Arkansas", said a former farm-owner at a San Luis Obispo pea-pickers' camp. "The cotton burned up" is their common story. They are largely farmers who have been carrying on agriculture on the family pattern which has been so long regarded as the great source of stability in our nation. One of them, now picking fruit with his family in the Sacramento Valley, told succinctly this story of his decline from farmer to farm laborer: 1927 - made $7,000 as a cotton farmer in Texas; 1928 - broke even; 1929 - went in the hole; 1930 - deeper; 1931 - lost everything; 1932 - hit the road; 1935 - serving the farmers of California as a "fruit tramp".

It is not only despair, but hope that draws the refugees to California, hope of finding work, of keeping off or getting off relief, of maintaining morale, of finding surcease of trouble; yes, and the climate which even the poorest can share. "We haven't had to have no help yet. Lots of 'em have, but we haven't", said Oklahoma pea-pickers on El Camino Real at Mission San Jose. "Relief? I wouldn't have it no way it was fixed". "All I want is a chance to make an honest living". - "When a person's able to work, what's the use of begging? We ain't that kind of people", said elderly pea-pickers near Calipatria.

Of course there are some persons who come to California simply as "touring transients" seeking more and better relief. The announced cessation of transient service relief and the program of the Works Progress Administration are intended to remove inducements to this type. But "transients" are not to be confused with "migrants". The great majority of those in distress who trek to our state avoid entirely or leave as soon as possible the "transient" class, i.e., persons on federal relief, with residence in another state. They join the "migrants" of California, i.e., persons who seek a living by work, following the crops. When relief is genuinely needed by these people to tide them over, there is usually genuine gratitude. "If it hadn't been for the relief groceries, what would we 'a' done? We think it's awful good in them to give us". But their real temper was expressed by a southwestern refugee encamped as a migrant on a dreary field at Shafter: "So many give up and stayed; they just give up everything. This is a hard life to swallow, but we can't just sit there and look to somebody to feed us".

White Americans predominate among the emigrants. Long, lanky Oklahomans with small heads, blue eyes, an Abe Lincoln cut to the thighs, and surrounded by tow-headed children; bronzed Texans with a drawl, clean-cut features and an aggressive spirit; men and women from Arizona, Arkansas, New Mexico, Missouri and Kansas.

During the two months ending August 15th, more than 15,000 men, women, and children - members of parties "in need of manual employment" - entered California in motor vehicles bearing out-of-state licenses, or probably about six percent of all persons entering in vehicles with out-of-state licenses. Largely they are refugees from drought and depression elsewhere. Thirty-eight percent of them came from the three states of Texas, Oklahoma and Arizona. Many refugees have already returned to the states whence they came, others will return. What the net permanent human deposit from this migration to our state will be, only the future can tell. Riff-raff? Probably no more than in every great migration. The weak are matched by the strong, the hardy, and the adventurous who seek in the west a new hold on life. Indigents? They are poor and in distress and many have had to take relief before they could obtain employment. When they arrive in our fertile valleys, without work or with insufficient work, they are the most ragged, half-starved, forgotten element in our population, needy, the butt of the jibes of those who look down on "pea-pickers" and "fruit tramps", but with a surprising morale in the midst of misery, and a will to work. These people are not hand-picked failures. They are the human materials cruelly dislocated by the processes of social erosion. They have been scattered like the dust of their farms, literally blown out. And they trek into California, these American whites, at the end of a long immigrant line of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Negroes, Hindustanis, Mexicans, Filipinos, to serve the crops and farmers of our state.

The catastrophic dislocation of people is always dramatic. It stirs our emotions, and rightly so. We cannot remain unmoved while distress pours into our highways and byways. But in viewing the trek to California of the drought refugees, let us not lose this perspective. Rural migration and the hardship and social instability which it entails, is not new to us, but old. For forty years or more laborers have been moving ceaselessly about our state with the seasons, following the crops. In 1927 the State Department of Education enumerated 37,000 migratory children alone. The best present estimates place the number of men, women and children who migrate at some time during the year to work in the crops of California at from 150,000 to 200,000. Here lies the major, permanent, and almost unique rural labor problem of California. The drought refugees, merging with the much greater mass of milling hordes which continually moves up and down the valleys of our state, have taken the spotlight, but we Californians know that in the incessant movement of our own migrants center the problems which we must attack. To this perennial phenomenon of our state, I invite your attention for the remainder of this discussion.

Some aspects of the farm labor problem of California have been illuminated rather fully in this forum. You have listened to discussions of the "embattled farmers" and the "communists", and enquired whether the radicals can "capture the farms of California". I do not propose to discuss rural labor in the terms of belligerency, of right and wrong, of law, or of patriotism, however defined. I intend rather to invite your consideration of some of the basic economic facts which underlie the agricultural structure and process in our state as they affect labor, and in affecting labor, affect us all.

The history of California agriculture can be written largely in terms of the shift from extensive crops to intensive crops. The dry farms, using mechanical methods of harvesting, which used to fill with grain the holds of sailing ships from all parts of the world, no longer predominate. With irrigation have come intensive crops with heavy demand for hand labor; citrus, grapes, fruit, vegetables, melons, cotton. In 1879 the value of intensive crops represented less than four per cent of the total value of California agricultural production. In 1929, only a half-century later, intensive crops represented not four per cent, but practically four-fifths of the total, or 78 per cent. Here lies the real explanation of the great migrations of the past which have given California its Oriental and Mexican labor populations and of the whiter migration of recent years and months.

Together with the rise of intensive crops is the large scale of the operations by which these crops are produced. The large farm is very prominent in our rural economy, and the large grower, as is well known, exercises great influence in the counsels of agricultural employers. More than one-third of all the large-scale farms in the entire country are located in California. Of all farms in the United States whose product is valued at $30,000 or above, nearly 37 percent are found in our own state. California has within its borders 30 percent of the large-scale cotton farms of the country, 41 percent of the large-scale dairy farms, 44 percent of the large-scale general farms, 53 percent of the large-scale poultry farms, 60 percent of the large-scale truck farms, and 60 percent of the large-scale fruit farms of the United States.

Together with crop intensification and large-scale production organization, have come commercialization of agriculture, higher capitalization, increased production for a cash market, and a high cash expenditure for wage labor. In Mississippi, typical of southern cotton culture, the average cash expenditure per farm for farm labor was only $137 in 1929. In Iowa, typical of the Middle West, the average expenditure was $323. In the United States as a whole, the average was $363 per annum. In California, the average cash expenditure on farm labor, per farm reporting, was $1,438, the highest of any state in the Union, and almost four times the national average.

All these factors -- the growth of intensive agriculture, highly capitalized, large-scale farming methods and concentrated ownership, huge payments to farm labor -- together have given us an industrialized agriculture, a system of open-air food factories, it might almost be called. Wage relations are highly developed, gang labor is employed, with foremen and sub-foremen. Elaborate piece rates are set up, with bonus payments. Farmers' agents recruit and distribute laborers. The state maintains labor commissioners who aid rural laborers to collect unpaid wages, just as they aid urban workers. Sporadic efforts are made at collective bargaining.

The rural wage-earning population so created, is, proportionately, the largest rural wage-earning class in any state of the Union. According to the census of 1930, barely 10 percent of all persons gainfully employed in agriculture in Mississippi were paid farm laborers. In the entire United States the percentage of farm laborers was 26. In Iowa it was 27. In California, paid farm laborers

constituted 57 percent of all persons gainfully employed in agriculture. This was more than double the national average, and was the highest proportion of paid farm laborers in any state. In other words, of all persons gainfully engaged in agriculture - owners, tenants, managers, laborers - only one in ten were paid laborers in Mississippi, and one in four in the United States. But in California more than half were paid laborers.

By reason of the intensification of our agriculture, then, and the economic structure which developed it, we have built up in our midst a rural proletariat, if you will, largely of alien race, propertyless, and without ties, protective or otherwise, to the soil which they till. We have deviated far from the American homestead pattern of the family farm, which survives in many parts of the country and in our national ideals.

Not only is our agricultural labor class large; it is also highly mobile, living a large part of the year almost literally "on wheels". The automobiles of the laborers are not luxuries. To even the poorest they are vital necessities of life. And the cost of their operation and upkeep cuts a large figure in the family budget. The car must be fed gasoline and oil to make the next harvest, or to get to and from the fields, and its wheels must be kept shod more carefully than the feet of the children. "The way the world's on wheels now, you've got to have gas and eats, and we don't get no more", said migrants at Marysville.

From Imperial Valley the migrants follow the harvests to the San Joaquin, Santa Clara and Sacramento Valleys, a distance of from 360 to 550 miles each way by air line, and much longer by road. Within each valley they move about, from camp to field, field to camp, and ranch to ranch. During August 1937, 11,500 Mexican laborers and their families, or a sustained daily average of 370, were counted moving north by motor vehicle over the Ridge Route to the San Joaquin Valley. Many more moved than were counted.

California migrants work also in other states: the Hood River and Yakima Valleys of Oregon and Washington, the Arkansas Valley of Colorado, the Salt River Valley of Arizona. Last month Mexicans from California harvested the pea fields of Idaho. During the two months ending August 15th, 4,400 California men, women and children, migrants "in need of manual employment", returned to our state by motor vehicle. This number was almost one-third as great as the entries during the same period of needy workers and their families in cars bearing out-of-state licenses.

The life of the migrants is hard. It is not a succession of vacation camping trips. Employment is intermittent, jobs are often precarious, and annual income is low. "We like to work and not just set around. I'd rather do anything but set around, but they just ain't no chance here in California, seems like", said Kern County migrants last spring. "Livin'? It's kind of sorry. You work awhile, then lay up a little, then go broke, and then move". "You wait for work two weeks", then "fight like flies for the work". "You eat it up faster than you can make it". A common estimate among employers and observers, of the average annual earnings of migrants is between $350 and $400.

Incessant migration retards the education of children. A few American parents are beginning to complain that their children cannot write as good English as they. There is growing consciousness that for many of their kind the future portends not progress from generation to generation, but retrogression. "These days people can't raise children as good as themselves", said a fruit tramp at Winters. "My children ain't raised decent like I was raised by my father. There was no 'rag houses' then ... but I can't make it", was the cry of a cherry picker.

The development of normal relationships between citizen and community, and between employer and employee, is not favored by constant movement. "My father was a track foreman at $1.25 a day, but we lived in a house and everybody knew us", said a fruit tramp. "This rancher has us for two or three weeks, and then he's through with me. He knows me till he's through with me". "Residenters" look askance at the nomads, and treat them as "outlanders". Children are stigmatized at school as "pea pickers".

Migrants are homeless, and at the mercy of whatever quarters may be available. In the increase of squatters' camps by the roadside, in the creek bottoms, or "no man's land", depression has dealt them a heavy blow. The California Division of Immigration and Housing describes these social pock-marks:

> "Groups of persons arrive at any given community and start a camp. No provision is made for sanitation, water supply or even general camp cleanliness. Such housing accommodation as they may have is eked out by wood, tin, or such cast-off material as can be obtained in the vicinity. A sorry picture is presented of a condition that threatens to be a serious menace to those communities where squatter camps exist. Moving the occupants away simply spreads the condition and local authorities are loath to act against people who came there in the hope of securing some employment. The division's attention has been called to a number of these squatter camps during the last winter, but has no legal authority to take remedial steps..."

At a Sacramento Valley squatters' camp there were only two privies, both filthy, for 500 people, and the water supply was contaminated. At a camp in Kern County, water was obtained only from the nearest service station, at 5 cents a bucket. The United States Special Commission on Agricultural Labor Disturbances in Imperial Valley in its report dated February 11, 1934, stated:

> "Living and sanitary conditions are a serious and irritating factor in the unrest we found in the Imperial Valley. We visited the quarters of the cities where live Mexicans, Negroes, and others. We inspected the temporary camps of the pea-pickers, and know that they are similar to the camps that will serve as places of abode for workers in the fields when melons are gathered. This report must state that we found filth, squalor, an entire absence of sanitation, and a crowding of human beings into totally inadequate tents or crude structures built of boards, weeds and anything that was found at hand to

give a pitiful semblance of a home at its worst. Words cannot describe some of the conditions we saw. During the warm weather, when the temperature rises considerably above 100 degrees, the flies and insects become a pest, the children are fretful, the attitude of some of the parents can be imagined, and innumerable inconveniences add to the general discomfort. In this environment there is bred a social sullenness that is to be deplored, but which can be understood by those who have viewed the scenes that violate all the recognized standards of living ... It is horrible that children are reared in an environment as pitiable as that which we saw in more than one locality".

For more than a score of years the state camp inspectors of the Division of Immigration and Housing have done yeoman work. Struggling against the obstacles of public apathy, inadequate staffs, resistance of employers unwilling or unable to do better, reluctance of local officials to apply penalties to their neighbors for violation of state camp sanitation laws, they have sought ceaselessly to attain better conditions by enforcement and by education. Some ranchers, notably larger farmers with long crop seasons, have been fully cognizant of the need, and have established good labor camps.

But even after all the efforts by enlightened and financially capable employers, and by state camp inspectors, the living conditions of scores of thousands of men, women and children are actually growing worse, as the increase of squatters' camps plainly demonstrates. The situation has got beyond finding someone to blame. Smaller farmers are financially unable to provide for the numerous workers and their families whose services they require only two or three weeks a year. And the squatters' camps, not located on the land of the employer, are not subject to the jurisdiction of state inspectors. If inspectors bring too much pressure to raise ranch camp standards, the farmer may refuse to house his laborers at all. In that event, their only recourse is to a squatter's camp, worse even than the camp of the farmer. They they have sunk to the bottom, where human deterioration is inevitable. As a squatter said, "Livin' a bum's life soon makes a bum out of you. You get started and you can't stop".

The hand of government should be extended to ameliorate the hardships of our largest agricultural group. Acting on this belief, the State Division of Rural Rehabilitation of the Federal Resettlement Administration, under direction of Harry Drobish, has engaged in study of the problem and has conferred with interested persons of all shades of opinion. The Division is now erecting two experimental camps for migrants, one at Marysville, the other in Kern County. Both are being constructed with cooperation from the State Emergency Relief Administration, and upon express invitation from, and with generous financial cooperation of the local authorities. The camps will provide minimum decencies for migrants: healthful site, pure water supply, sanitary toilets and garbage disposal, shower baths with hot and cold water, and simple laundry facilities. Competent supervision will insure observance of reasonable regulations for maintenance of sanitation and order. It will provide leadership for recreational and cultural programs for adults and the children.

Friends of the effort to eliminate squatters' camps have felt some apprehension lest under the tension which prevails, some large growers or vigilante groups might oppose establishment of decent public camps for migrants. However, this fear is probably groundless. At the Marysville camp, which is farthest toward completion, large and small growers and townsfolk have alike welcomed the camp, declaring it a measure of public welfare, and a boon to growers, to migrant workers, and to business.

Decent camps are not a palliative, for they are necessary to meet a permanent characteristic of California agriculture which demands mobile, seasonal labor. Nor do they induce excessive mobility. Migrant camps do not extend relief. They simply make it possible for those who do migrate in search of work to move from one decent camp to another, instead of from one wretched camp to another. They constitute a first measure of rehabilitation. The State Division of the Resettlement Administration is now requesting federal aid through the Works Progress Administration to permit erection of more camps, and it welcomes public support. It expects, in addition, to develop projects and seek federal aid to improve the housing of rural laborers, and to provide them with greater economic and social stability than they now possess.

In the interest of laborers, growers and the public, alike, it is imperative that measures be taken. It will not do to argue that the migrants are a low class, unworthy and incapable of improvement, or that many are aliens. Without resorting to sound sociological generalizations, it is easy to see that large numbers of migrants have lived far better in the recent past than now. "We ain't the chasin' around kind. Never did this before", said migrants in the southern San Joaquin Valley. A Federal conciliator points out: "It may be true that alien Mexicans ... live better in Imperial Valley than they do in their own country, but this cannot constitute an excuse for countenancing poverty and squalor in the United States". At Marysville one hears, "Tain't hardly fair. They holler that we ain't citizens, but their fruit would rot if we didn't come".

It is not sufficient to cry "move on". Last fall, at the conclusion of the pea harvest, the supervisors of a coast county voted $2500 to fill the tanks of the pickers' cars with gasoline enough to get them into the next county, to avoid having to feed them. The receiving county, resentful, sent word that if there is a repetition, the migrants will be turned back at the county line with guns.

Nor is it a solution simply to urge "stay put; don't migrate". The anachronistic laws which limit the right to receive relief to residents of the county, seek to stop movement between counties; our own state assembly has just approved barriers to interstate migration. "Because we went out and tried to make a livin', the relief turned us down", said a migrant at Bakersfield. "Now they're telling 'em there's work out there so why don't we go". And a fruit tramp at Winters added, "But my boys are American citizens. If war was declared, they'd have to fight, no matter where they was. I don't see why we can't be citizens because we move around with the fruit trying to make a living". Along the roadside near San Jose a migrant who had seen good days was perplexed: "Lots of farmers in Oregon and Washington don't want you if you have a California

license. Under the Constitution you should be allowed to move. But the relief rules say 'don't move'. If you're going to be a fruit tramp you have to move. If we can't go into a state without having so many hundred dollars, there's no hope".

We must not be content with specious solutions, whether barriers or aids to movement. We cannot fail to act because the migrants are a depressed class, or because they are not citizens of our county, state or nation. They serve our crops and our farmers, who need their good will. They come here at our invitation, expressed or implied. Their numerous children are citizens of the future whose quality is being determined today in the squatters' camps which litter our state.

The migrants and California's future? The answer lies in how we deal with major problems in the present. The trek of drought and depression refugees to California is the result of a national catastrophe. The succor of its victims is a national responsibility.

The plight of the migrants who follow the crops of our own state touches all Californians, and is our responsibility first. Today mobility is excessive. Its social cost is great. Measures to increase stability, without loss of economic freedom, are needed. And they will be welcomed by the migrants.

The prompt elimination of squatter camp conditions is vital to the interests of all. Squatters' camps are a menace to public health, to social health, and to good labor relations in agriculture. They are a fertile source of discontent, breeders of grievances and feeders of unrest. Their existence is a challenge to our society. They can be abolished.

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RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION

85 Second Street
San Francisco, California

SYNOPSIS OF SURVEY OF MIGRATORY LABOR PROBLEMS IN CALIFORNIA

By

DR. PAUL S. TAYLOR

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By

Dr. Paul S. Taylor, Regional Labor Adviser
Resettlement Administration

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Are these people Riff-Raff? Are they the almost unmitigated "moochers" that some declare? Are they an "invading horde of idle," as the newspapers call them? After having seen hundreds of them all the way from Yuma to Marysville, I cannot subscribe to this view. These people are victims of dust storms, of drought which preceded the dust, of protracted depression which preceded the drought. "It seems like God has forsaken us back there in Arkansas," said a former farm-owner at a San Luis Obispo pea-pickers' camp. "The cotton burned up" is their common story. They are largely farmers who have been carrying on agriculture on the family pattern which has been so long regarded as the great source of stability in our nation. One of them, recently picking fruit with his family in the Sacramento Valley, told succinctly this story of his decline from farmer to farm laborer: 1927--made $7,000 as a cotton farmer in Texas; 1928--broke even; 1929--went in the hole; 1930--deeper; 1931--lost everything; 1932--hit the road; 1935--serving the farmers of California as a "fruit tramp."

It is not only despair, but hope that draws the refugees to California, hope of finding work, of keeping off or getting off relief, of maintaining morale, of finding surcease of trouble; yes, and the climate which even the poorest can share. "We haven't had to have no help yet. Lots of 'em have, but we haven't," said Oklahoma pea-pickers on El Camino Real at Mission San Jose. "Relief? I wouldn't have it no way it was fixed." "All I want is a chance to make an honest living."--"When a person's able to work, what's the use of begging? We ain't that kind of people," said elderly pea-pickers near Calipatria.

Of course there are some persons who come to California simply as "touring transients" seeking more and better relief. The cessation of transients service relief and the program of the Works Progress Administration are intended to remove inducements to this type. But "transients" are not to be confused with "migrants." The great majority of those in distress who trek to our state avoid entirely or leave as soon as possible the "transient" class, i.e., persons on Federal relief, with residence in another state. They join the "migrants" of California, i.e., persons who seek a living by work, following the crops. When relief is genuinely needed by these people to tide them over, there is usually genuine gratitude. "If it hadn't been for the relief groceries, what would we 'a' done? We think it's awful good in them to give us." But their real temper was expressed by a southwestern refugee encamped as a migrant on a dreary field at Shafter: "So many give up and stayed; they just give up everything. This is a hard life to swallow, but we can't just sit there and look to somebody to feed us."

White Americans predominate among the emigrants. Long, lanky Oklahomans with small heads, blue eyes, an Abe Lincoln cut to the thighs, and surrounded by tow-headed children; bronzed Texans with a drawl, clean-cut features and an aggressive spirit; men and women from Arizona, Arkansas, New Mexico, Missouri, and Kansas.

During the six months ending December 15, 1935, more than 43,000 men, women, and children--members of parties "in need of manual employment"--entered California in motor vehicles bearing out-of-state licenses, or probably about five percent of all persons entering in vehicles with out-of-state licenses. Largely they are refugees from drought and depression elsewhere. Thirty-three percent of them came from the three states of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arizona. Many refugees have already returned to the states whence they came, others will return. What the net permanent human deposit from this migration to our state will be, only the future can tell. Riff-raff? Probably no more than in every great migration. The weak are matched by the strong, the hardy, and the adventurous who seek in the west a new hold on life. Indigents? They are poor and in distress and many have had to take relief before they could obtain employment. When they arrive in our fertile valleys, without work or with insufficient work, they are the most ragged, half-starved, forgotten element in our population, needy, the butt of the jibes of those who look down on "pea-pickers" and "fruit tramps," but with a surprising morale in the midst of misery, and a will to work. These people are not hand-picked failures. They are the human materials cruelly dislocated by the processes of social erosion. They have been scattered like the dust of their farms, literally blown out. And they trek into California, these American whites, at the end of a long immigrant line of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Negroes, Hindustanis, Mexicans, Filipinos, to serve the crops and farmers of our state.

The catastrophic dislocation of people is always dramatic. It stirs our emotions, and rightly so. We cannot remain unmoved while distress pours into our highways and byways. But in viewing the trek to California of the drought refugees, let us not lose this perspective. Rural migration and the hardship and social instability which it entails, is not new to us, but old. For forty years or more laborers have been moving ceaselessly about our state with the seasons, following the crops. In 1927 the State Department of Education enumerated 37,000 migratory children alone. The best present estimates place the number of men, women, and children who migrate at some time during the year to work in the crops of California at from 150,000 to 200,000. Here lies the major, permanent, and almost unique rural labor problem of California. The drought refugees, merging with the much greater mass of milling hordes which continually moves up and down the valleys of our state, have taken the spotlight, but we Californians know that in the incessant movement of our own migrants center the problems which we must attack. To this perennial phenomenon of our state, I invite your attention for the remainder of this discussion.

Some aspects of the farm labor problem of California have been illuminated rather fully in the forums of our state. You have listened to discussions of the "embattled farmers" and the "communists," and enquired whether the radicals can "capture the farms of California." I do not propose to discuss rural labor in the term of belligerency, of right and wrong, of law, or of patriotism, however defined. I intend rather to invite your consideration of some of the basic economic facts which underlie the agricultural structure and process in our state as they affect labor, and in affecting labor, affect us all.

The history of California agriculture can be written largely in terms of the shift from extensive crops to intensive crops. The dry farms, using mechanical methods of harvesting, which used to fill with grain the holds of sailing ships from all parts of the world, no longer predominate. With irrigation have come intensive crops with heavy demand for hand labor; citrus, grapes, fruit, vegetables, melons, cotton. In 1879 the value of intensive crops represented less than four percent of the total value of California agricultural production. In 1929, only a half-century later, intensive crops represented not four percent, but practically four-fifths of the total, or 78 percent. Here lies the real explanation of the great migrations of the past which have given California its Oriental and Mexican labor populations and of the whiter migration of recent years and months.

Together with the rise of intensive crops is the large scale of the operations by which these crops are produced. The large farm is very prominent in our rural economy, and the large grower, as is well known, exercises great influence in the counsels of agricultural employers. More than one-third of all the large-scale farms in the entire country are located in California. Of all farms in the United States whose product is valued at $30,000 or above, nearly 37 percent are found in our own state. California has within its borders 30 percent of the large-scale cotton farms of the country, 41 percent of the large-scale dairy farms, 44 percent of the large-scale general farms, 53 percent of the large-scale poultry farms, 60 percent of the large-scale truck farms, and 60 percent of the large-scale fruit farms of the United States.

Together with crop intensification and large-scale production organization, have come commercialization of agriculture, higher capitalization, increased production for a cash market, and a high cash expenditure for wage labor. In Mississippi, typical of southern cotton culture, the average cash expenditure per farm for farm labor was only $137 in 1929. In Iowa, typical of the Middle West, the average expenditure was $323. In the United States as a whole, the average was $363 per annum. In California, the average cash expenditure on farm labor,not per laborer, but per farm reporting, was $1,438, the highest of any state in the Union, and almost four times the national average.

All these factors--the growth of intensive agriculture, highly capitalized, large-scale farming methods, and concentrated ownership, huge payments to farm labor--together have given us an industrialized agriculture, a system of open-air food factories, it might almost be called. Wage relations are highly developed, gang labor is employed, with foremen and subforemen. Elaborate piece rates are set up, with bonus payments. Farmers' agents recruit and distribute laborers. The state maintains labor commissioners who aid rural laborers to collect unpaid wages, just as they aid urban workers. Sporadic efforts are made at collective bargaining.

The rural wage-earning population so created, is, proportionately, the largest rural wage-earning class in any state of the union. According to the census of 1930, barely 10 percent of all persons gainfully employed in agriculture in Mississippi were paid farm laborers. In the entire United States the percentage of farm laborers was 26. In Iowa it was 27. In California, paid farm laborers constituted 57 percent of all persons gainfully

employed in agriculture. This was more than double the national average, and was the highest proportion of paid farm laborers in any state. In other words, of all persons gainfully engaged in agriculture--owners, tenants, managers, laborers--only one in ten were paid laborers in Mississippi, and one in four in the United States. But in California more than half were paid laborers.

By reason of the intensification of our agriculture, then, and the economic structure which developed it, we have built up in our midst a rural proletariat, if you will, largely of alien race, propertyless, and without ties, protective or otherwise, to the soil which they till. We have deviated far from the American homestead pattern of the family farm, which survives in many parts of the country and in our national ideals.

Not only is our agricultural labor class large; it is also highly mobile, living a large part of the year almost literally "on wheels." The automobiles of the laborers are not luxuries. To even the poorest they are vital necessities of life. And the cost of their operation and upkeep cuts a large figure in the family budget. The car must be fed gasoline and oil to make the next harvest, or to get to and from the fields, and its wheels must be kept shod more carefully than the feet of the children. "The way the world's on wheels now, you've got to have gas and eats, and we don't get no more," said migrants at Marysville.

From Imperial Valley the migrants follow the harvest to the San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Sacramento Valleys, a distance of from 360 to 550 miles each way by air line, and much longer by road. Within each valley they move about, from camp to field, field to camp, and ranch to ranch. During August, 1927, 11,500 Mexican laborers and their families, or a sustained daily average of 370, were counted moving north by motor vehicle over the Ridge Route to the San Joaquin Valley. Many more moved than were counted.

California migrants work also in other states: the Hood River and Yakima Valleys of Oregon and Washington, the Arkansas Valley of Colorado, the Salt River Valley of Arizona. In August, Mexicans from California harvested the pea fields of Idaho. During the six months ending December 15, 10,000 California men, women, and children, migrants "in need of manual employment," returned to our state by motor vehicle. This number was almost one-fourth as great as the entries during the same period of needy workers and their families in cars bearing out-of-state licenses.

The life of the migrants is hard. It is not a successions of vacation camping trips. Employment is intermittent, jobs are often precarious, and annual income is low. "We like to work and not just set around. I'd rather do anything but set around, but they just ain't no chance here in California, seems like," said a Kern County migrant last spring. "Livin'? It's kind of sorry. You work a while, then lay up a little, then go broke, and then move." "You wait for work two weeks," then "fight like flies for the work." "You eat it up faster than you can make it." A common estimate among employers and observers, of the average annual earnings of migrants is between $350 and $400.

Incessant migration retards the education of children. A few American parents are beginning to complain that their children cannot write as good English as they. There is growing consciousness that for many of their kind the future portends not progress from generation to generation, but retrogression. "These days people can't raise children as good as themselves," said a fruit tramp at Winters. "My children ain't raised decent like I was raised by my father. There was no 'rag houses' then ... but I can't make it," was the cry of a cherry picker.

The development of normal relationships between citizens and community, and between employer and employee, is not favored by constant movement. "My father was a track foreman at $1.25 a day, but we lived in a house and everybody knew us," said a fruit tramp. "This rancher has us for two or three weeks, and then he's through with me. He knows me till he's through with me." "Residenters" look askance at the nomads, and treat them as "outlanders." Children are stigmatized at school as "pea pickers."

Migrants are homeless, and at the mercy of whatever quarters may be available. In the increase of squatters' camps by the roadside, in the creek bottoms, or "no man's land," depression has dealt them a heavy blow. The California Division of Immigration and Housing describes these social pockmarks:

> "Groups of persons arrive at any given community and start a camp. No provision is made for sanitation, water supply, or even general camp cleanliness. Such housing accommodations as they may have is eked out by wood, tin, or such cast-off material as can be obtained in the vicinity. A sorry picture is presented of a condition that threatens to be a serious menace to those communities where squatter camps exist. Moving the occupants away simply spreads the condition and local authorities are loath to act against people who came there in the hope of securing some employment. The division's attention has been called to a number of these squatter camps during the last winter, but has no legal authority to take remedial steps...."

At a Sacramento Valley squatters' camp there were only two privies, both filthy, for 500 people, and the water supply was contaminated. At a camp in Kern County, water was obtained only from the nearest service station, at 5 cents a bucket. The United States Special Commission on Agricultural Labor Disturbances in Imperial Valley in its report dated February 11, 1934, stated:

> "Living and sanitary conditions are a serious and irritating factor in the unrest we found in the Imperial Valley. We visited the quarters of the cities where live Mexicans, Negroes, and others. We inspected the temporary camps of the pea-pickers, and know that they are similar to the camps that will serve as places of abode of workers in the fields when melons are gathered. This report must state that we found filth, squalor, an entire absence of sanitation, and a crowding of human beings into

totally inadequate tents or crude structures built of boards, weeds and anything that was found at hand to give a pitiful semblance of a home at its worst. Words cannot describe some of the conditions we saw. During the warm weather, when the temperature rises considerably above 100 degrees, the flies and insects become a pest, the children are fretful, the attitude of some of the parents can be imagined, and innumerable inconveniences add to the general discomfort. In this environment there is bred a social sullenness that is to be deplored, but which can be understood by those who have viewed the scenes that violate all the recognized standards of living ... It is horrible that children are reared in an environment as pitiable as that which we saw in more than one locality."

For more than a score of years the state camp inspectors of the Division of Immigration and Housing have done yeoman work. Struggling against the obstacles of public apathy, inadequate staffs, resistance of employers unwilling or unable to do better, reluctance of local officials to apply penalties to their neighbors for violation of state camp sanitation laws, they have sought ceaselessly to attain better conditions by enforcement and by education. Some ranchers, notably larger farmers with long crop seasons, have been fully cognizant of the need, and have established good labor camps.

But even after all the efforts by enlightened and financially capable employers, and by state camp inspectors, the living conditions of scores of thousands of men, women, and children are actually growing worse, as the increase of squatters' camps plainly demonstrates. The situation has got beyond finding someone to blame. Smaller farmers are financially unable to provide for the numerous workers and their families whose services they require only two or three weeks a year. And the squatters' camps, not located on the land of the employer, are not subject to the jurisdiction of state inspectors. If inspectors bring too much pressure to raise ranch camp standards, the farmer may refuse to house his laborers at all. In that event, their only recourse is to a squatter's camp, worse even than the camp of the farmer. Then they have sunk to the bottom, where human deterioration is inevitable. As a squatter said, "Livin' a bum's life soon makes a bum out of you. You get started and you can't stop."

The hand of government should be extended to ameliorate the hardships of our largest agricultural group. Acting on this belief, the Resettlement Administration is now conducting two experimental camps for migrants, one at Marysville, the other near Weedpatch in Kern County. Both were constructed with cooperation from the State Emergency Relief Administration, and upon express invitation from, and with generous financial cooperation of the local authorities. The camps provide minimum decencies for migrants: healthful site, pure water supply, sanitary toilets and garbage disposal, shower baths with hot and cold water, and simple laundry facilities. Competent supervision ensures observance of reasonable regulations for maintenance of sanitation and order. It provides leadership for recreational and cultural programs for adults and the children. The record of the camps for elevation of morale as well as for reduction of disease is already established.

Friends of the effort to eliminate squatters' camps have felt some apprehension lest under the tension which prevails, large growers or vigilante groups might oppose establishment of decent public camps for migrants. To a very limited extent this is true, but the attitude of the smaller farmers and many of the large growers is distinctly friendly. At the Marysville camp, large and small growers and townsfolk have alike welcomed the camp, declaring it a measure of public welfare, and a boon to growers, to migrant workers, and to business.

Decent camps are not a palliative, for they are necessary to meet a permanent characteristic of California agriculture which demands mobile, seasonal labor. Nor do they induce excessive mobility. Migrant camps neither extend relief, nor will a chain of them alter the distribution of the relief load among counties. They simply make it possible for those who do migrate in search of work to move from one decent camp to another, instead of from one wretched camp to another.

The Resettlement Administration is now preparing to erect from 5 to 8 more camps with Federal aid, and it welcomes public support. As a second step, the Resettlement Administration plans to establish selected laborers and farmers who have lost their farms, on small plots of good land with decent homes, in order to provide greater stability, and a chance to regain full economic independence. As part of a broader program of rehabilitation and resettlement, therefore, migrant camps have unique value. Not only do they contribute to the abolition of squatter camps; they serve also as reservoirs from which distressed farm people can be filtered upward and selectively re-established on part-time farms, as tenants, and even assisted back to the ranks of farm owners. Thus for some, camps will constitute a first rung in a reconstructed agricultural ladder, which they can ascend in traditional American fashion according to their abilities.

In the interest of laborers, growers, and the public, alike, it is imperative that measures be taken. It will not do to argue that the migrants are a low class, unworthy and incapable of improvement, or that many are aliens. Without resorting to sound sociological generalizations, it is easy to see that large numbers of migrants have lived far better in the recent past than now. "We ain't the chasin' around kind. Never did this before," said migrants in the southern San Joaquin Valley. A Federal conciliator points out: "It may be true that alien Mexicans ... live better in Imperial Valley than they do in their own country, but this cannot constitute an excuse for countenancing poverty and squalor in the United States." At Marysville one hears, "Tain't hardly fair. They holler that we ain't citizens, but their fruit would rot if we didn't come."

It is not sufficient to cry "move on." In 1934, at the conclusion of the pea harvest, the supervisors of a coast county voted $2500 to fill the tanks of the pickers' cars with gasoline enough to get them into the next county, to avoid having to feed them. The receiving county, resentful, sent word that if there is a repetition, the migrants will be turned back at the county line with guns.

Nor is it a solution simply to urge "stay put; don't migrate." The anachronistic laws which limit the right to receive relief to residents of the

county, seek to stop movement between counties; even our own state assembly approved barriers to inter-state migration which only the opposition of the Senate prevented from becoming law. "Because we went out and tried to make a livin', the relief turned us down," said a migrant at Bakersfield. "Now they're telling 'em there's work out there so why don't we go." And a fruit tramp at Winters added, "But my boys are American citizens. If war was declared, they'd have to fight, no matter where they was. I don't see why we can't be citizens because we move around with the fruit trying to make a living." Along the roadside near San Jose a migrant who had seen good days was perplexed: "Lots of farmers in Oregon and Washington don't want you if you have a California license. Under the Constitution you should be allowed to move. But the relief rules say 'don't move'. If you're going to be a fruit tramp you have to move. If we can't go into a state without having so many hundred dollars, there's no hope."

We must not be content with specious solutions, whether barriers or aids to movement. We cannot fail to act because the migrants are a depressed class, or because they are not citizens of our county, state, or nation. They serve our crops and our farmers, who need their good will. They come here at our invitation, expressed or implied. Their numerous children are citizens of the future whose quality is being determined today in the squatters' camps which litter our state.

The migrants and California's future? The answer lies in how we deal with major problems in the present. The trek of drought and depression refugees to California is the result of a national catastrophe. The succor of its victims is a national responsibility.

The plight of the migrants who follow the crops of our own state touches all Californians, and is our responsibility first. Today mobility is excessive. Its social cost is great. Measures to increase stability, without loss of economic freedom, are needed. And they will be welcomed by the migrants.

The prompt elimination of squatter camp conditions is vital to the interests of all. Squatters' camps are a menace to public health, to social health, and to good labor relations in agriculture. They are a fertile source of discontent, breeders of grievances and feeders of unrest. Their existence is a challenge to our society. They can be abolished.

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Region IX
California
Arizona
Utah
Nevada

R9-5-FRS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF INFORMATION

85 Second Street
San Francisco California

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Statement of Paul S. Taylor
University of California
before the
Special Senate Committee to
Investigate Unemployment and Relief, March 14, 1938.

More agricultural laborers fall on relief than farmers. In 1935 they numbered more than half a million. Not only do they outnumber farm operators on relief, but their exposure to the hazard of relief is about twice as great as that of the farmer. It is clear, therefore, that the measures so far taken to improve the status of agriculture have not sufficed to make secure the livelihood of its wage-earners. Rural poverty and relief are not alone problems of obtaining fair prices for farmers.

The earnings of farm laborers are low, even of those who escape relief. An approximate average annual cash income of only $265 was reported by a recent nation-wide study of farm laborers in eleven representative counties. In three of these counties, cash income was less than $200, and in one of them it fell as low as $127. These laborers were not indigents, for less than two percent of their average income came from relief. As might be expected, dependence on relief was greatest in the county where cash income was lowest. In that county, because of the inadequacy of earnings, twenty percent of the farm laborers received relief.

Severe underemployment, coupled with low wage rates, is the major cause of the farm laborers' low income and high dependence on relief. Demand by employing farmers for the services of laborers fluctuates greatly. In Florida, to cite an extreme example, carlot shipments of fruits and vegetables vary from twenty-six in August to 18,000 in March, and demand for agricultural workers rose and fell accordingly. In the Yakima Valley of Washington, demand for full-time hired workers fluctuates from less than 500 in December and January to more than 32,000 during the second week of September. In Arizona, peak labor demand is six times the slack. In California, it is about four times the slack.

Under these conditions, which are more widespread than generally is realized, anything approaching full-time employment for even a majority of the workers is obviously impossible. Only about forty percent of the laborers in the nation-wide study cited earlier received as much as 240 days, or approximately nine months' work within a year. And thirty-seven percent, or more than one-third, failed to receive as much as 120 days, which is well under five months' employment.

Underemployment has been further aggravated for some years past by the unbalance of farm labor supply and demand. This condition has been extreme almost continuously since 1929, and has existed to some degree ever since 1927. In January 1933 the index stood at the peak of 236 men available for every 100 jobs; the latest index, in January 1938, was 116. Reflecting this great oversupply of farm labor, farm wage rates during recent years have failed to keep pace with the trends of farm prices and of factory wage earnings.

In different sections of the country different types of farm laborers predominate. The type and status vary with the crops of the region and the agricultural structure under which they are produced. The basis of their poverty and remedial policies to be considered can be understood best by examination of the major labor types.

The "hired man" is still the predominant type of farm laborer in the North. Wage workers constitute 77 percent of all farm laborers in that region. The balance are unpaid members of the family of the farmer, whether owner or tenant. In years of extreme drought, most of the hired laborers in some sections of the North have been forced onto relief. But barring years of drought or economic disaster to the price of corn or wheat, the employment of the hired man in the North is generally steadier and his cash earnings with perquisites higher than the average of farm wage workers throughout the country. Socially, as well as economically, his position is above average.

This is not to deny a poverty or relief problem among farm wage workers in the North. On the contrary, poverty and relief strike the seasonal laborers upon whom the farmers' harvests depend, especially those who live in cities and towns and lack the protection which the farmer extends to the hired man living upon his farm. And even the hired man suffers, probably disproportionately, from general hard times on the farm. He lacks the protection of social security legislation, and he faces growing restriction of opportunities to ascend the agricultural ladder.

In the South, contrasting sharply with both North and West, unpaid members of the operator's family predominate over wage workers. In the South Atlantic States this predominance is practically two to one. Mostly these unpaid workers are members of the family of tenant operators or of sharecroppers, the latter themselves merely laborers by another name. Of the combined total of sharecroppers and farm laborers in the entire South, only 42 percent are wage workers. Studies of the cash incomes of wage workers in the South regularly report earnings below those of all other classes of the cotton growing population. They burden the relief rolls heavily, and their numbers are being increased by powerful forces, as I shall explain shortly.

In the West, the problem of poverty and relief focuses increasingly upon the agricultural workers who serve an industrialized form of agriculture upon which the nation depends for a large

proportion of its fruits and vegetables. The family-farm and the hired man survive in the West, but in the great irrigated valleys which support most of the production, large-scale farming methods are predominant. Forty-seven percent of the large-scale cotton farms of the country are located in California and Arizona. More than one-third of the large-scale farms of all types are found in California alone. In the Pacific States less than one percent of the farms, those which employ ten or more laborers, employed practically one-third of all the paid farm laborers. Agriculture carried on under these conditions is essentially an industry. Labor is organized in gangs under foremen or contractors, paid by the piece, hired as seasonal requirements dictate, and then fired to migrate elsewhere in search of the next seasonal peak. Farming is not a "mode of life", but the operation of open-air food factories. These wage-earners are not shielded by the farmer's paternalism over his hired man. Their life and labor assume the industrial pattern.

The problem of agricultural workers in the West is aggravated even more than in other sections by the continual rise and fall of labor demand in the irrigated valleys. The peak labor requirements of Arizona occur in November and December. In southern California they occur in May and again in September and October. In the great Central Valley of California the peak in the southern portion is in August and September and in the northern portion it is in April and May. In the Yakima Valley of Washington it is in September. In the Idaho pea fields it is in August. This continuously unstable labor demand compels ceaseless migration of many thousands of families in an effort to piece together a series of short employments. According to a recent study of migratory families in California, the average number of miles travelled between jobs within that state alone during a year was 516. Twenty-eight percent of the families travelled more than 1000 miles.

If the harvest to which the migrants have travelled a hundred miles or more should fail, either because of weather or low price, the migrants almost immediately fall upon relief. In the winter of 1936-37 a freeze ruined the early pea crop in Imperial Valley, California, which supplies the country with table peas at that season. As a direct result, the relief load in Imperial County rose from 188 families in November to 1,638 families in February, practically 10 percent of whom had been in California less than a year.

The conditions under which these migrants live frequently beggar description. The numbers of migrants often greatly exceed the facilities. "Squatter" camps arise, spreading squalor and disease.

> "Groups of persons arrive at any given community and start a camp. No provision is made for sanitation, water supply, or even general camp cleanliness. Such housing accommodations as they may have are eked out by wood, tin, or such cast-off material as can be obtained in the vicinity. Moving the occupants away simply spreads the condition and local authorities are loath to act.." (California Immigration and Housing Commission)

A federal commission investigating the pea pickers' strike in Imperial Valley in 1934 declared:

> "....We found filth, squalor, an entire absence of sanitation, and crowding of human beings into totally inadequate tents or crude structures built on boards, weeds, and anything that was found at hand to give a pitiful semblance of a home at its worst.....In this environment there is bred a social sullenness that is to be deplored, but which can be understood by those who have viewed the scenes that violate all the recognized standards of living."

The Farm Security Administration has established a small chain of sanitary camps in the West. These are doing all that was promised of them to raise living standards and morale, and reduce the public cost of disease, and relief. But they are insufficient in number to prevent the continuance of squatters' camps and similar evil conditions in California, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Arkansas, Florida, and other states. In 1936, 90 percent of the reported cases of typhoid fever in California occurred among rural migrants. Typhoid has again broken out on the trail of the 1938 pea harvest in Imperial Valley. The costs and hazards of the low standard of living of the agricultural workers of the West continue to fall on the public as well as on the families of the laborers.

A recent study of migratory families by the California Department of Health states that "over 27 percent of the children have nutritional defects, many of which cannot be corrected because of the low family income", and that only 11 percent of the children were getting daily the amount of milk "considered optimum for growth and development, while 15.8 percent were getting no milk."

All the agricultural labor problems of the West are being severely aggravated by the influx of refugees from the Great Plains and the drought states. These refugee families are mostly rural--farmers, tenants, croppers, laborers, and some townsfolk--people who have been dislodged by years of drought and depression. They stream west in battered cars filled with children, blankets, stoves, and the remnants of household furniture. Their destination is generally California, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, or Idaho. Most of them go to California. Between June 15, 1935, and December 31, 1937, the California Department of Agriculture counted entering the state by motor vehicle more than 221,000 persons belonging to parties "in need of manual employment." A large proportion of these persons join the milling agricultural labor supply and remain in the West.

About 84 percent of these refugees to California have come from the drought states, and about 60 and 57 percent, respectively, of the rural immigrants to Oregon and Washington. Forty-one percent of the migrants to California have come from the three states of Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas.

The stream of distressed refugees continues to flow and to embarrass the agricultural labor problem of the West. During the last half of 1937, 49,000, or only 12 percent fewer migrants entered California than during the last half of 1936 when drought was severe. Other expelling causes than drought are at work. The effects of depression are still accumulating, and now mechanization of the cotton farms is an added factor in the expulsion of farmers and farm laborers from the Cotton Belt.

The future displacement of southern cotton workers when a mechanical cotton picker shall have been perfected is well recognized. The serious displacement now in progress in the wake of the all-purpose farm tractor has been scarcely noticed. Yet tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and farm laborers--whites and negroes alike--are being swept from the land and onto relief in some of the most important sections of the Cotton Belt. Planters are dispensing with their croppers and tenants, retaining the few necessary to operate tractors, and paying them by the day when they work. A planter in the Mississippi Delta, to cite an outstanding example, purchased 22 tractors and 13 four-row cultivators, let go 130 out of his 160 cropper families, and retained only 30 for day labor.

The rural landscape is strewn with abandoned houses. Residents in western Texas explain as they point:

> "There used to be two families out there. The tractor got both of them." "That farm has made a living for a family ever since the land was broke." "The tractors are keeping our families from making a living."

Rural schools decline. Village merchants fail. Drought undermined them, and mechanized farming finishes them. Class bitterness is stirred, and even the government program intended to benefit the farmer becomes a focus of strife. A postmaster explained: "The landlords get the government crop reduction money and buy tractors with it and it's putting the renters out. The landlords take all the reduction money. If the tenants don't give 'em all, they put 'em off." From those who already have been dispossessed from the land this story of the machine comes in bitterness and despair. From those who face the same fate the story comes in stark fear.

On a Sunday morning last June I stopped at a tenant's house near the Texas Panhandle. There I found seven men gathered together for the morning. These young Texans are all displaced tenant farmers, victims of mechanized farming. The oldest man in the group is 33. All are on W.P.A. They support an average of four persons each on $22.80 a month. All are married and have families except one, who supports his mother and father. These seven Texans represent and support 29 persons. Native Americans all, none of them can vote, for Texas levies a poll tax of $3.50 on man and wife. This process of sweeping farmers from the land is now under way in

western Texas, southwestern Oklahoma, the BlackWax Prairie of Texas, the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas, and it is incipient in other areas. Between 1930 and 1937 the proportion of farm tractors in the United States which were found on farms of the ten cotton states increased from 12.2 percent to 18.5 percent, and the number of tractors in the cotton states practically doubled.

The record of power farming in cutting cotton workers from the land is already impressive. Tenants, croppers, and laborers are forced into the towns in large numbers and drawn back onto the farms only for short seasonal employment at chopping and picking time. A pattern of mobile cotton workers is spreading, with planters dependent on wage laborers imported seasonally from more and more distant towns and cities. On a Saturday morning last June I watched from 1000 to 1500 cotton hoers loaded into huge trucks in Memphis, Tennessee, to be hauled to plantations as far as 43 miles each way for the day's work. Mostly they were former sharecroppers, cut from the land. Last year, for the first time, planters in the Mississippi Delta imported Mexicans from Texas for cotton chopping, the smaller of the two seasonal labor peaks. These importations occurred in the section where mechanization is farthest advanced. The cotton worker's year is being divided into occasional employment by the day on the plantations between May and December, and virtual idleness in the towns from December to May. The burden grows of relief of unemployed farm laborers congregated in the towns and cities of the South.

But this problem, originating in the South, is national in its repercussions. People in distress do not like to remain where they see no opportunity. Outlets will be sought wherever they seem to exist. Well-worn channels of escape have been cut by earlier labor emigration to the North, and already the victims of mechanized farming are moving to the West where they join the agricultural laborers. On the 27th of last month at a single camp of migratory farm laborers near Shafter, California, I talked with families expelled finally by mechanized farming from the three states of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. From 1935 to 1937 the common explanation of the refugees was "went broke", and "burned out, blowed out, eat out." Now we are beginning to hear "tractored out." The volume of the stream of emigrants from this cause may be expected to increase.

Acute problems are raised both in the states of origin of the dispossessed farm families and in the states of destination. The latter seek to build up bulwarks against poverty-stricken laborers by every device from foolish and illegal police blockades to denial by state agencies not only of state relief but even of access to federal relief. The former states are evidently willing that their distressed citizens should leave, and increasingly place obstacles in the way of their return. And the victims who migrate as agricultural laborers lose one residence without acquiring another, and fall between the state and federal agencies set up for relief. The relief of these migrant agricultural laborers cannot be left safely to the responsibility of the states concerned. This is clear for several reasons:

1. The state in which they take refuge seeks to avoid giving relief for fear that the indigent refugees will acquire by residence the legal right to continuing relief from that state. This is done not only generally to conserve relief funds for needy citizens of the state. It is done also to protect the higher relief standards maintained there. The average amount of general relief per case in Arkansas in November 1937, for example, was $6.19, compared to amounts ranging from $12.67 to $28.22 in the four far western states, or from twice to four times the relief standard of Arkansas.

   Therefore, the California State Relief Administration, for example, now refuses even to certify to the Works Progress Administration indigent farm laborers who have been in California less than one year, even though the WPA is willing to give them work relief. The State Relief Administration gives these transients temporary relief only while their residence in another state is being verified. Then they are offered transportation back to the state of origin. If they refuse, no further relief is granted, and they must shift for themselves.

2. The states from which the refugee families depart, are increasingly reluctant to accept the return of their distressed families. Relief authorities of Arkansas, for example, have recently advised the transient whose transportation back to his home state California is ready to pay, that relief funds in Arkansas are inadequate, that granting of relief usually involves delay, and that sometimes it is impossible to give any aid to persons in need. As a further deterrent it is required that this Arkansas citizen in distress in California write back home "explaining to us why you think that coming to Arkansas will be the best plan for you" before Arkansas relief authorities will decide whether or not they will authorize his return.

   Kansas, by its statutes of 1935, impedes return by denying any legal responsibility to extend relief to its former citizens who lose their rights "by willful absence from the county.....for six months or more." Other states impose obstructions of one sort or another.

   Thus, the states of emigration and the states of immigration vie with each other in seeking to shunt responsibility for destitute laborers' families seeking better economic opportunities through migration.

The futility of this procedure is understood by the refugees themselves, who generally adopt one of two courses:

(1) If they want a temporary pleasure trip home from the coast they accept California's offer to pay their transportation back

A letter, dated February 2, 1938, from the county relief administrator of LeFlore County, Oklahoma, who figuratively throws up his hands at the whole proceeding, reveals the situation:

"....I wish to advise that it is humanly impossible for me to investigate and establish citizenship in this county of families desiring to return from California.

"In this department I have no Case Workers and the County being the third largest in the State, it is all I can possibly do to look after the people now in this county. In the past I have authorized the return of a goodly number of families from your state and after they paid a short visit to their relatives and friends, they all returned to California, with one exception. In view of this fact I feel that it is an imposition upon your state as well as a burden on myself to investigate these cases and authorize return from which it seems, that in all cases, it is just for a visit."

(2) If they do not accept their transportation home "for a visit", and the great majority do not, they simply tighten their belts, and with the aid of friends and intermittent work stick it out until a year's sojourn within the borders of California gives them legal right to demand relief from that state. The sharp rise of the relief load in California rural counties beginning November 1937 is attributed largely to the expiration of the year of residence for many of these needy families. Next year if the reduction of 37 percent in the acreage of cotton planned by the farm program is accomplished, the California relief agencies face prospects of an even greater load at the same season when cotton is the main source of employment.

(3) In the meantime, of course, the most needy of our agricultural labor families, including many women and children, have been left to carry their own distress, living literally in the open fields or the brush, on ditch banks and by the roadside, with children definitely undernourished, and all exposed to disease and a menace to public health. The refugees carry the burden, but the public does not escape.

A further weakness in the present condition lies in the fact that little, if any, judgment is used to determine whether the relief extended anchors those who should be aided to strike out for a new start with chances of success, or fails to hold those who should be anchored. Funds go to continuing relief which would better go toward measures to rehabilitate.

Our bad handling of these migratory families is not because state administrators and state legislators are either perfidious or inhumane. The failure lies in the fact that the problem inherently transcends state powers and responsibilities. Interstate cooperation, guided by federal leadership and assumption of an important measure of responsibility for temporary relief and for permanent rehabilitation as well is the logical basis for effective action.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THEM?

By Paul S. Taylor
University of California

Address before the Commonwealth Club of California
San Francisco, April 15, 1938

We call them "Dust Bowlers." Ever since the droughts of 1934 and 1936 they have been streaming westward from the Great Plains. A count at the California border records the entry to our state by automobile alone of 221,000 refugees between the middle of 1935 and the end of 1937. More than four-fifths of them came from the drought states. In vivid phrases they tell us the tragedy of Nature: "Burned out, blowed out, eat out." What shall we do with them?

We call them "Dust Bowlers." But it is not only the parching of the Plains and the blowing of the topsoil which expels these people. If that were all, the return of rain to the dust bowl would end the exodus. But the causes are more deep-seated and more enduring than the hostile fluctuations of weather. At the close of the war, prices of cotton and of wheat collapsed, and with them, many thousands of rural families were shaken from their positions on the agricultural ladder. Farm owners lost the equities in their farms and became tenants; tenants were reduced to laborers, and farm laborers did what they could. This process, begun in the depression of the early twenties, was accelerated by the depression of the early thirties. Then came drought and grasshoppers, and whole sections of the rural population already loosened by the accumulating forces of successive depressions were finally dislodged by a catastrophe of Nature. Those not anchored by the farm program and the relief policies of the government are seeking refuge by flight.

Now the rains have come again to the Great Plains, yet the tide of refugees flowing westward scarcely slackens. The number of distressed migrants entering California during the last half of 1937 was 49,000, or only 12 per cent below the number coming during the last half of 1936 when drought was severe. And more migrants have come to California during the first quarter of 1938 than came during the first quarter of 1937. Clearly, other expelling forces than drought are at work. The effects of depression and recession are still accumulating, and now mechanization of the cotton farms is an added factor in the expulsion of farmers and farm laborers from the Cotton Belt.

We have long recognized the future displacement of southern cotton workers when a mechanical cotton picker shall have been perfected. But the serious displacement now in progress in the wake of the all-purpose farm tractor has been scarcely noticed by the public or recognized by the government. Yet tenant farmers, sharecroppers and farm laborers -- whites and Negroes alike -- are being swept from the land and onto relief in some of the most important sections of the Cotton Belt. Planters are dispensing with their sharecroppers and tenants, retaining the few necessary to operate

tractors, and paying them by the day when they work. A cotton planter in the Mississippi Delta, to cite an outstanding example, had 160 sharecropper families. He purchased 22 tractors and 13 four-row cultivators, let go 130 out of 160 of these families, and retained only 30 for day labor.

Where the tractors are appearing the rural landscape is strewn with abandoned houses. Residents in western Texas explain as they point:

> "There used to be two families out there. The tractor got both of them." "That farm has made a living for a family ever since the land was broke." "The tractors are keeping our families from making a living."

Rural schools decline. Village merchants fail. Drought undermined them, and mechanized farming finishes them. Class bitterness is stirred, and even the government program intended to benefit the farmer becomes a focus of strife. A small town postmaster explained: "The landlords get the government crop reduction money and buy tractors with it, and it's putting the renters out. The landlords take all the reduction money. If the tenants don't give 'em all, they put 'em off." From those who already have been dispossessed from the land this story of the machine comes in bitterness and despair. From those who face the same fate the story comes in stark fear.

On a Sunday morning last June I stopped at a tenant's house near the Texas Panhandle. There I found seven sturdy young men gathered together for the morning. These Texans are all displaced tenant farmers, victims of mechanized farming. The oldest man in the group is 33. All are on W.P.A. They support an average of four persons each on $22.80 a month. All are married and have families except one, who supports his mother and father. These seven Texans represent and support 29 persons. Native Americans all, none of them can vote, for Texas levies a poll tax of $3.50 on man and wife. These men, like hundreds of others, find nothing they can turn to on the Plains where they were born. They search for 200 miles in every direction and find no places which they can rent. With mechanization, the size of farms is increasing, and little is left for the tenants but sub-marginal land, relief, or flight.

This process of sweeping farmers from the land is now under way in western Texas, southwestern Oklahoma, the Black Wax Prairie of Texas, the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas, and it is incipient in other areas. In 1930 the proportion of farm tractors in the United States which was found on farms of the ten southern cotton states was only 12 per cent. By 1937 it had risen to 18 per cent. In seven years the number of tractors in the cotton states has practically doubled.

The record of power farming in cutting cotton workers from the land is already impressive. Tenants, sharecroppers, and laborers are forced into the towns in large numbers and drawn back onto the farms for only short seasonal employment at chopping and picking time. A pattern of mobile cotton workers is spreading, with planters dependent on wage laborers imported seasonally from more and more distant towns and cities. On a Saturday morning last June I watched from 1000 to 1500 cotton hoers crowded into huge trucks

in Memphis, Tennessee, to be hauled to plantations as far as 43 miles each way for the day's work. The trucks left between 5 and 5:30 in the morning, and returned as late as 8:30 in the evening. Mostly the laborers were former sharecroppers, going back to hoe cotton for $1 or $1.25 a day, cut from the land. The cotton worker's year thus is being divided into occasional employment by the day on the plantations between May and December, and virtual idleness in the towns from December to May. The burden grows of relief of unemployed farm laborers congregated in the towns and cities of the South.

As Californians, we have felt remote from the critical problems facing the population of the Cotton Belt. But our feeling is founded upon illusion, for the Southern regional problem is national in its repercussions. California's stake in its solution is direct and immediate, for people in distress do not like to remain where they see no opportunity. Outlets will be sought wherever they seem to exist. Already from the western portion of the old Cotton Belt the victims of mechanized farming are moving West. Six weeks ago at a camp of migratory agricultural workers in the San Joaquin Valley I talked with families expelled by mechanized farming from the three states of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. From 1935 to 1937 the common explanations of the refugees were "went broke" and "the cotton burned up." Now we are beginning to hear "tractored out."

What can these people do? Where can they go? They try relief in the towns, and seasonal labor in the cotton. They try to scratch out a living on the sandy and exhausted farms of their native states. They seek a precarious foothold on cut-over lands of the Pacific Northwest. They try for jobs in the shrinking labor markets of the industrial North. They join the migratory agricultural laborers of Arizona, Oregon, Washington and California in the West, and of Florida in the Southeast. Most of those who leave the Cotton Belt come west. The time has certainly arrived when as a Nation, as well as a State, we must ask the question, "What shall we do with them?"

First there is the problem of relief in California. We all know that refugee families are often destitute when they arrive, or commonly they become so during slack seasons. We all know that during recent weeks the Farm Security Administration has been obliged against the wishes of State authorities to relieve the distress of more than 9,000 families who have been in our State less than one year. With prospects of more refugees to come, we are apprehensive and alarmed at the cost. We are harried by the fear that indigent refugees will acquire by a year's residence the legal right to continuing relief at our expense. In this state of mind, our California agencies have taken stern measures. The chief of police of Los Angeles tried illegally to blockade the border. Our state administration now denies relief from state funds, and also denies access to Federal W.P.A. funds to those in distress during their first year in California. If they apply for needed assistance, we give these transients only temporary relief while their residence in another state is being verified. Then we offer to pay their transportation back. If they refuse, we grant no further relief, and they must shift for themselves.

The states from which the refugee families depart increasingly are reluctant to accept the return of their distressed families, even at our expense. Authorities of Arkansas, for example, have recently advised the transient whose transportation back California is ready to pay, that relief funds in Arkansas are inadequate, that granting relief there usually involves delay, and that sometimes it is impossible to give any aid at all to persons in need. As a further deterrent this Arkansas citizen in distress in California is required to write back home "explaining...why you think that coming to Arkansas will be the best plan for you" before Arkansas authorities will decide whether or not they will authorize return. In a letter dated February 23, 1938, the welfare director of a county in South Dakota denies any responsibility at all for a family in distress in California which left his county only a few months ago. He writes to our authorities:

> "...We wish to advise that Mr. Ford left South Dakota in the fall of 1937 for the purpose of establishing a home. Therefore he does not have a South Dakota state settlement and authorization for his return cannot be secured. We trust the above information will be of some assistance to you in planning for your client."

Other states impose similar obstructions.

Thus the states of emigration vie with us and with the other states of immigration in seeking to avoid responsibility for destitute farm families who have enough initiative to seek economic opportunity through migration.

The futility of our relief procedure is understood by the refugees themselves, who generally adopt one of two courses:

(1) If they want a temporary pleasure trip home from the coast, they accept California's offer to pay their transportation back. A letter dated February 2, 1938 from the county relief administrator of LeFlore County, Oklahoma, who figuratively throws up his hands at the whole proceeding, reveals the situation:

> "...I wish to advise that it is humanly impossible for me to investigate and establish citizenship in this county of families desiring to return from California.
>
> "In this department I have no case workers and the County being the third largest in the State, it is all I can possibly do to look after the people now in this county. In the past I have authorized the return of a goodly number of families from your state, and after they paid a short visit to their relatives and friends, they all returned to California, with one exception. In view of this fact I feel that it is an imposition upon your state as well as a burden on myself to investigate these cases and authorize return from which it seems, that in all cases, it is just for a visit."

(2) If they do not accept their transportation home "for a visit," and the great majority do not, they simply tighten their belts, and with the aid of friends and intermittent work stick it out until a year's sojourn within the borders of California gives them the legal right to demand relief from our state.

We may as well face the fact that we cannot stem the tide by withholding relief from the destitute men, women, and children who are taking refuge within our borders. Our western growers and labor contractors invite and even aid some of them to come -- both whites and Negroes. But they need no specific invitation, for we use them to harvest our crops and they are turning their backs on closing opportunities at home. However meager their existence as migrants on the Pacific Coast, it offers more than the prospect of indefinite dependence on relief at home. So long as this differential in opportunity exists, they will continue to come. As an attempt to check migration, therefore, our present relief policy is futile.

This is not to say that state administrators and state legislators are either perfidious or inhumane. Their failure to meet the distress of the migrants lies in the fact that the problem inherently transcends state powers and responsibilities. It cannot be left safely to the several states.

What shall we do? A California Representative has introduced in Congress a bill providing federal reimbursement to the states for relief granted to transients, prescribing uniform state residence standards, and interposing a check to this growth of a population legally without home, by requiring that residence in one state shall not be lost until it is acquired in another.

Some Californians, our State Relief Administration and State Chamber of Commerce among them, believe that this bill introduced by Congressman Voorhis should specify state residence requirements more stringent than self-maintenance without relief during 14 months out of 24. But before pressing for serious modification of the terms of prospective federal aid we Californians will do well to remember two facts: First, we are asking 48 states to vote money which will go mainly to a half dozen states, and primarily to our own. Second, if by insistence we jeopardize passage of a bill extending federal aid, the burden of relieving these people falls on us both legally and in fact, at the end of one year's residence in California. It seems plain, therefore, that not only common humanity but state economy as well, dictate that we urge the California delegation in Washington to demand passage of the Voorhis bill.

But relief of the distressed is not the only problem which centers about these people. Two years and a half ago in this forum I outlined a program for the abolition of squatters' camps in our state. I can report substantial progress in that direction. The Farm Security Administration now maintains seven sanitary camps for migrants. Visit these camps as you drive through the southern San Joaquin Valley at Shafter or Arvin, at Indio in the Coachilla Valley, at Brawley in the Imperial, or at Marysville in the Sacramento Valley. These camps are accomplishing what was promised of

them, by promoting public health and sanitation and raising morale. In addition to the seven camps already in operation, three more are under construction.

But the task is not ended. Preventable disease still stalks the migrants and endangers the public health. In 1936 most of the typhoid cases in our state originated among the migrants. This year typhoid has again broken out on their trail. It started among the pea pickers at Calipatria in February, and promptly was carried to the San Joaquin Valley. Smallpox, too, has appeared. Prompt measures by the State Department of Public Health, which has just administered 20,000 inoculations for typhoid and 56,000 vaccinations for smallpox, have checked the spread of these diseases. When the migrants need medical care and lack the money to pay for it, they face two alternatives. Either they are rejected by the county hospital authorities on the ground they are not residents, and so fail to receive treatment, suffer needlessly, and endanger the health of the community or else they are accepted reluctantly, and the heavy cost of their care is imposed on the counties where they happen to be when they fall sick. Both alternatives are undesirable.

What, then, shall we do next about the problem of public health, sanitation, and medical care? First, the State Division of Immigration and Housing, which is responsible for inspecting labor camps, has been crippled. We should strengthen it. Second, we should ask the federal government to share the costs of medical care of transients. These steps we should take for our own protection as well as for the protection of the agricultural workers.

And in addition, we should extend to agricultural workers the protection of social security laws, which, granted them in England and a dozen other countries, is still denied them in the United States.

Thus far I have answered your question "What shall we do with them?" in these terms: We cannot stop them from coming by refusing to give them relief in California when they need it. They are forced from their own communities; directly and indirectly we invite them; we use their labor. Not only are they here by tens of thousands of families, but more are coming. These simple facts we must face. It follows as elementary, therefore, that whether we like them or not, we dare not tolerate in our midst their hunger and the malnutrition of their children, their unsanitary living conditions, and their disease. Neither the State of California nor the United States can postpone or avoid this responsibility.

But in your minds lie questions deeper than those which I have answered. You wish to know: Is there nothing we can do to check this stream of refugees which pours in upon us and threatens even to grow larger? Is there nothing we can do to so incorporate into our economic life those migrants whom we must receive, that the problems of relief, health, housing, and industrial strife which are now so pressing may not permanently afflict our agriculture? In brief, we face the question: What can we do to introduce some stability into a situation now marked by disintegration, chaos, misery, and conflict? It is to this fundamental issue that I now turn.

The Great Plains and the southern Cotton Belt, I have already pointed out, are suffering the dislodgment of their farm people because of various forces, among them drought and mechanization of the farms. Since we are receiving their dispossessed, it is logical and proper that we demand of those areas that they shall put their house in order, and provide the basis for maintaining at home the maximum number of their own people which those regions can support according to an American standard of living. In the Great Plains this means the fullest development of its potential water resources, the proper agricultural practices to conserve moisture, and the proper balance between crops and grass.

In the Cotton Belt more drastic and sustained measures are necessary. In from three to five generations our American ancestors, under the cotton plantation system, have mined the soil of its fertility and even destroyed the topography of its rolling surface. In the Piedmont especially the fields are badly gullied, and large sections of the country which were the most fertile, are almost irretrievably lost to agricultural production. In many sections, the yield of cotton per acre is maintained only by the heavy use of costly chemical fertilizers. If the South is not to dislodge millions of her rural people, she must abandon the one-crop cotton complex, expand animal husbandry, develop a more diversified and self-sustaining agriculture, and undertake upon an even greater scale the conservation and restoration of her depleted soils.

In both the Great Plains and upon the better lands of the Cotton Belt the progress of mechanization is spreading the pattern of the large-scale industrialized farm with which we are so familiar in California. The progress of the machine cannot and should not be halted, but the pattern in which it leaves farm people on the land should not be left to uncontrolled forces if human stability is to be achieved. I shall speak further of this problem shortly when I refer to our own rural structure.

What shall we say about the Great Plains and the Cotton Belt? We should insist that they carry through the reforms of their agricultural structure and practices that their own thoughtful people are urging. We should insist that they carry out the policies indicated in the reports of the Committees on the Great Plains and on Farm Tenancy. The tenancy program, basic to stabilization in the South, has been held in Congress to a snail's pace. Because we receive those who are being dislodged in the South, and face the prospect of receiving more, California should insist that these agricultural reforms go forward. Our State should use its full influence in Washington to ensure adequate national support for the stabilization of the rural structures and peoples of the South and of the Plains.

It may be that deterioration of the soil and over-expansion of agriculture have already gone so far that surplus population in these regions must be squeezed out, even with a program of agricultural reform. Indeed, this is the view of our most careful students. If this be true, we should insist that the advantages of supporting surplus populations in those regions

which produced them, on relief if necessary, be balanced against their opportunities for self-support elsewhere. They should not be cut adrift, or even encouraged to leave by shoddy relief policies at home.

This answer to the question "What can we do to check the stream of refugees?" will be unsatisfactory to Californians, but it seems in accord with the basic facts. If stabilization of the rural population in the South and Great Plains offers little hope of checking the flight of refugees immediately, at least it promises for the long run a balance between population and land which will not easily expel new waves of migrants in the future.

The final question remains: What can we do to so incorporate in the economic life of California those migrants whom we must receive, that the pressing problems of relief, health, housing, and incessant strife may not permanently afflict our agriculture?

Our first thought goes naturally to the land, and to the great reservoirs which the Reclamation Service is building in the West -- Columbia Basin, the Central Valley project, Boulder Dam, and others. If new farms were rapidly being brought under irrigation in the years immediately ahead a ready answer might be at hand. The Columbia Basin project alone will ultimately irrigate 1,200,000 acres of land, or half of the total of land to be irrigated by all 12 of the Reclamation projects in the West. But the Columbia Basin will not be ready for any settlement within 5 years, and the last unit will not be ready for at least 30 years. The United States Commissioner of Reclamation, John C. Page, states of all these projects that "at no time in the next 10 years will we be able to offer for settlement more than 150,000 acres in any one year." This implies that in no year during the next ten will new irrigation provide settlement for more than, say, 2,000 families. The Commissioner dashed effectively the hope that new irrigation will resettle the refugees to the West when he said in January, 1938: "The Columbia Basin project, if it were finished at this time, would provide homes for less than half of the farm families already driven by drought from the Great Plains alone." The frontier is gone, and there are few new lands. If we are to solve our problem, we must solve it upon the lands which we now farm.

We are all familiar with the basic facts of farm organization in California, particularly the large-scale industrialized type which predominates in those areas to which the refugees are attracted. More than one-third of all the large-scale farms of the United States are concentrated in our State. Absentee and corporation ownership are common, hiring and firing practices follow the old industrial pattern, and a roving, landless proletariat provides the shifting peak labor supply upon which the crops depend. Our most acute rural problems are inseparable from this type of agriculture -- destitute restless workers, incipient labor organization, violent strikes, nervous and scarcely concealed vigilantism. It is the refugees and others now working in this type of agriculture that we mean when we say, "What shall we do with them?"

Our problem is how to introduce stability where there is none. As a first step we can stabilize many of the migrants on small garden plots of ground, adjacent to as much employment as possible, where they can raise a portion of their subsistence, live in a decent house, and keep the children in one school as long as possible. From this base the father and older sons can migrate when necessary. At Arvin in Kern County, 20 of these houses located each on two-thirds of an acre of land, are already occupied by farm laborers' families which rent them for $8.20 a month. The Farm Security Administration has allocated funds for 150 more of these houses in California and has let contracts for 80 of them.

As a second step, we can select some families according to capacity, and stabilize them at a higher level by similarly locating and providing them with low-rental housing, and in addition, equipping them to supply themselves through a cooperative with dairy, poultry, and vegetable products. Units of this type have already been started in California and Arizona.

These two steps will stabilize and elevate the standard of living of the migrants as laborers. But we still hold in this country to the belief that there should be opportunity for those at the bottom to ascend the agricultural ladder. A third step we can take, therefore, is to establish landless farm families as operators on farms. Where land and other conditions are favorable, every advantage should be taken of the economies of machine methods and low overhead through large-scale operation. In the interest of consumer as well as producer, the economies of corporate farming so fully developed in the West should be retained. But instead of resident corporation managers on huge tracts employing hordes of landless laborers, could we not establish large corporate farms operated by resident farmers working cooperatively under competent management, and sharing the proceeds? The Farm Security Administration is now operating a few farms of this type in the West and South. They are aimed not only to give opportunity to farmers who are landless. They are planned to establish a type of farm organization which will produce economically, prevent the deep divisions that now rend our countryside, and introduce stability among those who live from the land.

These measures are suited particularly to the portions of the old South and West, where mechanization and industrialization of agriculture are now producing the greatest human dislocation and turmoil. They should have a major place in the national farm program. The Department of Agriculture must face its full responsibilities.

Region IX
California
Utah
Arizona
Nevada

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
Division of Information
San Francisco, California

THE PLACE OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN SOCIETY

Paul S. Taylor
Professor of Economics, University of California

Paper read before the 12th Annual Meeting of
Western Farm Economics Association, June 15, 1939

Note: I wish to acknowledge indebtedness to students in my seminar on agricultural labor for their work in collecting material on historical phases, particularly to Isabelle Berg, LaWanda Fenlason Cox, Varden Fuller, and Alyce Williams. Responsibility for interpretation of these materials is mine. P.S.T.

The traditional American ideal of the place of the worker upon the land was expressed by Theodore Roosevelt in the words "working farmers," which he wrote into his introduction to the 1910 report of the Commission on Country Life. Nearly 50 years earlier the Homestead Act had laid down as our national policy that these working farmers should be owners. In Congressional debate at the time a Representative from Indiana declared:

> Instead of baronial possessions, let us facilitate the increase of independent homesteads. Let us keep the plow in the hands of the owner. Every new home that is established, the independent possessor of which cultivates his own freehold is establishing a new republic within the old, and adding a new and strong pillar to the edifice of the state.

This Act of 1862 represented victory for northern farmers over southern planters in the long struggle to determine the pattern of workers on the land which found its culmination in the Civil War.

In the shaping of issues before the War, the existence of a growing number of wage workers employed on farms played no part. Indentured service had died out in the early 19th century, unnecessary in the North and eclipsed by slavery in the South. Thus the appearance of the conflict was only in terms of the extremes - slave labor on plantations on the one hand, and owners working their farms on the other.

In the first stages of colonial settlement along the frontier of the North, free land and the absence of a great cash crop to make slave labor profitable resulted in a pattern with few farm workers who were not owners. But by the outbreak of the Revolution the institution of the farm wage worker who lived with the family and was paid by the month had appeared, and by 1800 it had become general. To describe this peculiar and intimate relationship an Americanism was invented in the words "hired man," used in lieu of the inappropriate British term "servant man."

As the frontier rolled westward across the Mississippi Valley, areas were opened where cash crops could be grown which yielded returns

from which labor could be paid. Family labor was not always sufficient, and some farmers acquired more land than one family could work. Thus "hired men" became numerous.

They did not, however, become a class. In their origins, they were mainly sons of other farmers and their social status differed little from that of unpaid family laborers or of their employers.

> The self-respecting [hired man] was a recognized and respected member of the neighborhood. His was the independence of a free citizen as really as that of his employer... If his wages were small, the scale of living about his was a simple one...The employer worked beside his man. (E. Chapman, New England Village Life, p. 118.)

An even more important determinant than their family origins, that farm wage workers should not become a class, was the existence of opportunity to rise. There was always an outlet for hired men who could push West and buy a new farm for themselves. Besides, farmers began to retire or to shift to other vocations, to live wholly or in part on the capitalized value of their farms, either selling them on time or letting them to tenants. The trend was facilitated by general industrial expansion which increased markets for agricultural produce, raised the value of land and opened opportunities to those who chose to leave their farms. It opened a graduated opportunity on lands already occupied and formed the steps which later came to be called the "agricultural ladder."

A contemporary description at the end of the 19th century of this place in agriculture of the farm laborer is given in the 1911 reports of the United States Industrial Commission:

> Farm labor, in a large and true sense, is the work of the farmer, the tenant, the crop sharer, and the laborer hired for wages. These forms of effort are inextricably involved, the farm laborer of one year being the farm owner of another, and the sons of farm owners laborers temporarily, tenants later, and ultimately proprietors. In this country land titles are not tied up by primogeniture, nor agricultural classes held by caste to semiserfdom of social and industrial conditions. It is impossible to chain an American to a life service in any industrial class. (Vol. XI, p. 133.)

A decade later, statistics were adduced to affirm that

> Correspondents were asked whether it was reasonably possible for farm laborers and tenants to save enough to buy a farm that would support a family even with the help of a mortgage and their replies indicated that 72 per cent of farm laborers and tenants find it reasonably possible to acquire farm ownership. (Geo. K. Holmes, Supply and Wages of Farm Labor. Yearbook of Agriculture, 1910, pp. 189-200.)

Since this statement included tenants with laborers, another inquiry was made to ascertain "to what extent male outdoor farm laborers were qualified

to become farm tenants." It produced the answer that in the north and south central states, 46 and 48 per cent, respectively, and in the north and south Atlantic states, 33 and 35 per cent of farm laborers were qualified to rise on the land.

It was on these terms only, that the existence of a group of wage workers which had been entirely outside of, and contrary to our dominant national ideal for the place in society of workers on the land, came to be accepted. If the group was not part of the original plan, at least it shared the general American opportunity to rise in the scale according to individual capacity. Indeed, it was held that this opportunity to leave farm work was so necessary a part of American ideals that cries of labor shortage from farm employers should be accepted with satisfaction as evidence of the workings of democracy. This view found expression in the report of the Commission on Country Life:

> There is a general, but not a universal, complaint of scarcity of farm labor. This scarcity is not an agricultural difficulty alone, but one phase or expression of the general supply problem.
>
> So long as the United States continues to be a true democracy, it will have a serious labor problem. As a democracy, we honor labor, and the higher the efficiency of the labor, the greater the honor. The laborer, if he has the ambition to be an efficient agent in the development of the country, will be anxious to advance from the higher forms of effort, and from being a laborer himself he becomes a director of labor. If he has nothing but his hands and brains, he aims to accumulate sufficient capital to become a tenant, and eventually to become the owner of a farm home. A large number of our immigrants share with the native-born citizen this laudable ambition. Therefore there is a constant decrease of efficient farm labor by these upward movements.

The remedy for the employer faced with labor shortage was not to press demands upon government to supply workers at wages and conditions which the farmer could meet. It was rather to stabilize employment, promote rural health, and make farm life more attractive to the laborer. The hard alternative was faced without blinking:

> The country must meet the essential conditions offered by the town; or change the type of farming. (Commission on Country Life.)

In 1937, a quarter of a century later, national stock was again taken of the place in society of the worker on the land. Tenancy had increased from 25 per cent of all farmers in 1880 to 42 per cent in 1935. More than one-fourth of all persons gainfully employed in agriculture were wage laborers (1930). Previously these facts had caused no concern. In 1901 an agent of the Industrial Commission noted the existence of a large number of laborers and an increase of tenancy, but he had reported complacently:

> The incumbent tenants are usually farm laborers or

> sons of farmers, and tenancy is a stepping stone to ownership. That some do not succeed is more the result of bad management than of bad markets or bad laws, for the enterprising and persistent do succeed while others fail...It is found that the trusted farm laborer often becomes a tenant, and eventually a proprietor. It is shown that tenancy is temporary, but there is no tenant class and little likelihood of one. (Vol. XI, p. 85, 74.)

The Committee on Farm Tenancy appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1937, however, saw in this growth of tenancy no steps to help laborers up the ladder. On the contrary, it reported with deep concern:

> ... an increasing tendency for the rungs of the ladder to become bars--forcing imprisonment in a fixed social status from which it is increasingly difficult to escape.

Recent studies confirm the apprehension of the Committee; they indicate that many are forced to descend the rungs and that ascent has become more difficult. As the tenant has lost opportunity, so has the laborer.

We are face to face, then, with the fact that a large number of persons gainfully employed in agriculture--probably not far from one-third --have more or less fixed labor status as wage workers or share-croppers. A group which had no place at all in our original ideal for workers on the land; whose existence, when discovered, was reconciled to our national conception of democracy only because there remained free opportunity to rise--this group is now recognized to bear increasingly the mark of a class as chances of ascending the agricultural ladder, or of finding outlets into industry, grow more difficult. Can a large farm labor class be reconciled with democracy? The Commission of Theodore Roosevelt seems to have answered "no."

In the light of this question posed by the contradiction between national ideals of the place in society of the worker on the land and the actual product of historical development, let us examine the nature and proportions of our present agricultural structure.

In 1930 about 52 per cent of those engaged gainfully in agriculture were operators--owners, managers, or tenants. About 16 per cent were unpaid laborers of the operator's family. Except as these are members of the families of croppers (the census does not tell us), they are not truly members of the farm labor class, and I omit them generally from my analysis of that class. Nearly 33 per cent are wage workers and croppers, the latter usually simply workers by another name, paid in kind. It is this third of our working population on the land whose place in society you have asked me to discuss.

Throughout our national history, divergent types of agricultural labor have predominated in different sections of the country. Those differences remain. In the North the "hired man" survives as a type more generally than anywhere in the country. Of all the farm laborers, paid and unpaid, in that section, wage workers constitute 77 per cent.

Racially they are not greatly different from their employers, and this together with the predominance of the family farm, ensures for the laborers something of the favorable social status which our ancestors meant when they said "hired man" instead of "hired servant."

In the South unpaid members of the operator's family comprise a much more important part of the labor supply, but even there the combined total of wage workers and croppers comprises more than 60 per cent of all laborers. The plantation system is a dominant form of agriculture in the South. Its true character as large-scale agriculture with many employees per farm is concealed by defective census classification which persists despite criticism from experts for at least a generation. Because of this system, and the fact that its wage workers and croppers are so largely colored, the laborers of southern agriculture have had little "place in society" other than as servants on the land. This pattern was rejected by the nation in the 1860's, but nevertheless survived in the South. Excepting in recent times since the South has shared national political power, there has been no serious attempt to reconcile the status of southern farm laborers with national ideals of the proper place of workers on the land.

In the West, particularly on irrigated lands, a variant of the southern plantation system has developed, based on wage workers. These paid laborers comprise virtually nine out of ten of all farm laborers. Family laborers are hardly more than one-tenth.

The scale of farming is large in the West. More than 57 per cent of all large-scale farms in the United States are located in that section. In Imperial Valley, California, where an extreme development has been reached, the average cash expenditure for labor, per farm reporting to the 1930 census, rises to $3,498 or more than nine times the national average. Absenteeism is well developed. In both Arizona and California, one-quarter of the total wage bill for agricultural workers is expended by managers operating farms for others.

These conditions sharpen the line which defines agricultural workers as a class, for they add to the difficulty of ascending the agricultural ladder. Their significance is now recognized by the laborers themselves who seek sporadically to organize, and it has long been recognized by leaders of western agriculture. In 1926 a spokesman for the agricultural department of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce said:

> The old-fashioned hired man is a thing of the past... there is no place for him, and the farmer who does not wake up to the realization that there is a caste in labor on the farm, is sharing too much of his dollar with labor. We are not husbandmen. We are not farmers. We are producing to sell. (Quoted by Varden Fuller in his unpublished doctoral dissertation.)

The status of agricultural laborers recognized so clearly in this statement is not confined to California, although it is perhaps most easily recognized there and in Arizona. Its existence elsewhere, especially since contraction of industrial opportunity, is becoming more

readily apparent as labor conflict becomes incipient. Already it has appeared in other sections of the West from the Salt River Valley [illegible] Yakima Valley, and in the El Paso and Lower Rio Grande Valleys of Texas. The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union is active in the Cotton Belt. Attempts to organize sugar beet workers are made in Colorado and Minnesota. Onion workers strike in Ohio and truck workers in New Jersey.

These conflicts and efforts to organize mark the recognition by agricultural workers of the disappearance of their opportunities to rise. They occur, like American trade unions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in those sections of their industry where commercialization and wide markets are most fully developed.

Deviation from the traditional farm labor pattern has always been recognized quickly when it assumed that form of mobile labor which is characteristic of highly specialized, highly seasonal, large-scale agriculture. As long ago as 1901 this departure from the national ideal was clearly visible and easily recognized as such:

> ...the annual inundation of grain fields in harvest time, hop yards in the picking season, fruit picking in districts of extensive market orchards, and similar harvest seasons requiring large numbers of hands for a short time, has a demoralizing effect on farm labor, reducing its efficiency in those lines. Such employments demand little skill; the requirements of each are simply and easily satisfied. They constitute a low order of farm labor, if worthy to be classed with it at all, and are excrescences upon its fair face. (U. S. Industrial Commission, Vol. XI, p. 79.)

Since 1901 mobile agricultural labor has grown in importance in the West with the demands of expanding irrigation. Although it has declined in the wheat belt because of the combine harvester, it has increased in the cotton belt as cotton moved on to the plains of Texas and Oklahoma. In modified form a pattern of mobile labor is now expanding in the richest delta land of the South. It has grown, too, in the Southeast, along the Atlantic seaboard, and in berry and fruit crops of the Mississippi Valley. As industrial opportunity continues to lag, and agricultural depression is prolonged, evidences of the growing class character of agricultural labor, whether mobile or not, become plainer and more widespread. And they make agricultural employers uneasy, as the early trade unions made industrial employers uneasy.

Theodore Roosevelt's 1910 Commission on Country Life, as noted earlier, had been alive to the importance to democracy of the existence of opportunity for farm laborers. The President's Committee on Farm Tenancy of 1937 was equally alert to sense the danger to democracy of the fundamental change in condition of agricultural workers represented by its disappearance. The report declares:

> Should the rungs of the agricultural ladder become rigid bars between classes, an American ideal would be lost. In a community of rigid groups, normal democratic processes are unable to function. The Committee has noted

instances where disadvantaged groups in their attempts to organize and increase their bargaining power have been unlawfully prevented from exercising their civil liberties.

The effect of denial of civil liberties to a group, unfortunately, is not limited. It permeates to many elements of the community and includes private citizens and public officials alike in its meshes. The published report of General Pelham D. Glassford, who represented the Departments of Labor and Agriculture and the National Labor Board in Imperial Valley in 1934 makes this plain:

> After more than 2 months of observation and investigation in Imperial Valley, it is my conviction that a group of growers have exploited a communist hysteria for the advancement of their own interests; that they have welcomed labor agitation, which they could brand as "red," as a means of sustaining supremacy by mob rule, thereby preserving what is so essential to their profits, cheap labor; that they have succeeded in drawing into their conspiracy certain county officials who have become the principal tools of their machine...
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> Spread upon the pages of recent Imperial Valley history are certain lawless and illegal events which have been suppressed or distorted in local news accounts, and which have not been investigated by the officials who are charged by law with that responsibility. Reputable clergymen, lawyers, business men, and other citizens of Imperial Valley have informed of their personal knowledge and observations, insisting upon a promise of confidence, so great was their fear of retaliation, boycott, or actual violence. One active vigilante remarked "I'd like to be out of this mess, but what can I do? If I don't 'line up' my business will be ruined." (Hearings before House Committee on Labor, 74th Congress, 1st session, on H.R. 6288, p. 37.)

The ease with which even patriotic Americans can approve measures which violate those traditions of democracy in agriculture which established themselves nationally in 1862 and have been confirmed by commissions of two presidents, is plainly revealed by the recently expressed wish of another general that members of a congressional committee "could go down [to the Valley] and breathe that pure 100 percent loyal Americanism."

The attempt to meet crystallization of farm labor into a class because it has lost the opportunity to rise, with a denial of the right to organize is of a piece with the insistent demand of large agricultural employers for a continuous supply of the kind of labor they need. In 1928 a spokesman of the Agricultural Legislative Committee of California opposed limitation of immigration of laborers from Mexico on grounds of scarcity of labor in the United States:

> We must have somebody in this country to do our work. Somebody, somewhere, has to do hard physical labor, because it is here to be done. If the American people

> refuse to do it, then what are we to do? Why, we must bring somebody else in from the outside who will do it. Under our present system of reduction, we must either bring somebody in here to do our hard work or we must go elsewhere for our foodstuffs and clothing. (Hearings before House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 70th Congress, 1st session, on H.R. 6465, p. 307.)

~~Of course this view~~ is the diametrical opposite of the position affirmed in 1910 by the Commission on Country Life which I quoted earlier. We seem ready to do almost anything rather than face the alternative to our problem proposed by that commission, namely, to "change the kind of farming."

In the contemporary effort to reconcile facts with national ideals, we are faced with a problem more difficult than that which confronted the commission of Theodore Roosevelt. We cannot simply do as they did--amend the formulation of the national ideal of the place of the laborer upon the land, and reassure ourselves that all is well despite factual alterations of the original plan. In 1910 they could do this with validity for their position, at least for the time. In 1939 we cannot do so. Unless we are willing to accept such extreme measures as in times of crisis have found expression in Imperial Valley, we must modify both the formulation of the ideal as facts have made this inevitable, and at the same time alter the pattern of labor on the land. By doing so we accept the alternative boldly offered by the Country Life Commission.

The Farm Security Administration of the United States Department of Agriculture is the agency most actively engaged in experimentation with the place of the workers on the land. Its work properly is characterized by variety--individual laborer's housing with subsistence gardens, cooperative housing and cooperative subsistence farming, communities of individual farms, cooperation between individual farmers for purchase and use of work animals and machinery, cooperative large-scale farming under management with division of proceeds. The results of these experiments should be studied and there should be congressional support to undertake many more.

Formulation of the national ideal, too, requires some modification. While experiments are in progress, and doubtless longer, we face the prospect of a large class of agricultural workers. To those for whom we cannot reopen opportunity with new patterns for security on the land, we must offer some alternative protection, in harmony with democratic methods, from the harsh workings of competition. In the light of a long and honorable tradition of protective legislation in both English and American industry, this need for protection requires logically the extension of social legislation to workers in agriculture. I shall illustrate with but a single example.

The United States Social Security Board has recommended to the President and to Congress within recent months that old-age insurance be extended to include agricultural workers employed in "large-scale farming operations" and that exemption should apply "only to the services of a farm hand employed by a small farmer to do the ordinary work connected

with his farm." The reasons given for this recommendation are grounded on the principle that "it is sound social policy to extend old-age insurance to as many of the nation's workers as possible" and on the belief that the proposed extension is "administratively feasible."

Provision of old-age insurance is one of the most popular measures of recent years, and the board has proposed to tax only the larger farmers for the support of their employees in old age. But curiously, employing agricultural interests have defeated the proposal in the Ways and Means Committee of the House. More than that, under leadership of large-scale operators in the West, the protection of old-age insurance has just been removed (July 1939) from some 300,000 agricultural and quasi-agricultural employees previously covered, many of them employed in the highly industrialized operation of processing farm produce.

If our historical analysis of the place of agricultural workers in society is correct, the leading spokesmen within agriculture, but not those on its industrialized side, may be expected to support rather than to oppose extension of social security to their workers. Indeed, agricultural leaders on the President's Farm Tenancy Committee have joined in this recommendation. It will be interesting to observe, therefore, which course the representatives who lobby for organizations of working farmers will choose.

A basic fact which underlies any proposal to extend old-age insurance into the agricultural industry is the concentration of employment on relatively few of our more than six million farms. The number of farm operators who reported to the census of 1930 that they spent no cash for farm labor was 58 per cent of the total, or 3,657,000 farmers. Wendzel's study of the 1935 census showed even higher percentages of farms employing no workers in January and July of that year, namely, 85.8 and 78.2 per cent, respectively. The same study showed that in January only 1.3 per cent of all farms, with ten or more wage workers per farm, employed 14.9 per cent of all wage workers. Another 1.4 per cent of all farms, with three to nine wage workers per farm, employed 24.5 per cent of all wage workers. Thus 2.7 per cent of all farms employed nearly 40 per cent of all wage workers. Another 12.6 per cent of all farms, with either one or two workers per farm, employed the remaining nearly 61 per cent of all wage workers in agriculture.

This concentration of employment both adds justification to a proposal to extend coverage into agriculture, and makes it administratively feasible. The more fully that the impersonal relationships characteristic of industry extend into agriculture, the more appropriate it is that protective rules and practices developed for manufacturing industry should be applied also to the agricultural industry. The fewer farm operators with whom contact is necessary to ensure observance of the practice, the simpler the problem of administering it.

To exempt small farmers from taxation on their employees as the Social Security Board proposes, it is suggested as a reasonable and convenient line of distinction, that all employees on farms with annual cash wage bill of less than $500 be omitted from coverage. On the basis

of 1930 census returns, which showed that 58 per cent of farms made no cash expenditures for labor, and that the average expenditure of those reporting any expenditure at all was only $363, it seems conservative to estimate that about 88 per cent of all farm operators reported by the census would be exempted by the $500 provision--58 per cent because they paid no cash, and, say, 30 per cent because their wages bill was less than $500. On this estimate the employees of about five and one-half million farm operators would be exempted, and only three-quarters of a million covered.

It is significant of the geographical impact of extension of old-age insurance in the manner suggested that only in New England, Mountain, and Pacific divisions do average cash expenditures for labor, per farm reporting, exceed $500 (1930 census). The impact on farm operators by tenure is still more interesting. Average cash labor expenditures on farms of owners and of tenants stood nationally at only $464 and $261, respectively, but on those farms operated by managers which reported cash expenditures for labor, the average was $2,985. It is not difficult to see what type of farm operation would contribute to old-age insurance most heavily, and what types would be generally exempted.

These estimates are made on the basis of the census of 1930. Actual coverage doubtless would be reduced materially below these figures by the fact that farm wage rates, which stood at an index of 180 in 1929 (1910-1914 equals 100), had dropped to 117 in January 1939, or by 35 per cent.

In January 1935, fifty-six per cent of all employed hired laborers were at work on farms with two or more workers. In July, Wendzel has estimated conservatively that the percentage rose to 59.9. (Monthly Labor Review, September 1937.) It appears, therefore, that a law exempting wage workers on farms with annual wage bill of less than $500 would require administrative contact with well under three-quarters of a million farms and would exempt over five and one-half million farmers. But it would extend old-age insurance to nearly three-fifths of all farm employment for wages. Owner and tenant operators would be exempted much more generally than manager-operators.

If political spokesmen for agricultural interests decide to oppose recommendations of the Social Security Board for extension of coverage into agriculture with exemption for employees of small farms, the decision would seem clearly to be grounded on misconception of the problem rather than on any valid basis for objection by a majority of American farmers.

With detailed analysis of the proposal to extend old-age insurance before you, it is probably unnecessary to make similar analysis of other forms of social legislation which might be applied to agriculture.

One aspect of the relation of agricultural wage workers to the community should be mentioned in closing. In seven or eight states, most of them in the South, the poll tax requirements for voting operate to disfranchise farm wage workers because their incomes are too low

generally to permit payment of the tax. Colored laborers who comprise one-fifth of all farm wage workers frequently are subject to additional discriminations against voting on the grounds of race. Migratory workers often find themselves disqualified from political participation because of residence requirements for eligibility, or because absence from home on election day is necessary to obtain work.

The place of agricultural workers in society is in transition today. We face again as in 1862 and in 1910 the periodical necessity of restating our national ideals of what that place should or can be. In 1937 this restatement was made by the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy, modifying, but continuing the working-farmer-owner democratic tradition established by the Homestead Act and followed by the Commission on Country Life. This tradition has its challengers again as it had before the war between the states. Their effort is strongest and best organized in those sections of the country, particularly of the West, where in industrialized forms, modern variants of the plantation system of agriculture have been established.